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ABSTRACT

This paper delineates the purposes of a symposium that was based on a major study of the California School Improvement Program (SIP). The problem of increasing the capacity of schools to implement reform efforts is conceptualized. To explore this issue, a conceptual framework was developed, based on the case study and survey data from the first and second year of the study. Selected findings from the study are used to illustrate why this conceptual framework is empirically necessary to account for the patterns of reform found in SIP schools. Findings are also presented that pertain to the forms SIP took at a local school site. These include process orientation, categorical program orientation, and funding source orientation. The relationship of each of these SIP orientations to overall changes made at the schools is displayed in a series of tables. In general, process-oriented schools were likely to improve, while program-oriented schools were likely to maintain their previous levels of outcomes. The overall implication from the study is that effective change processes will require a careful mapping of the local change situation, including background factors, foreground factors, and implementation processes as related to various types of schooling outcomes. (TE)

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CONCEPTUALIZING THE PROBLEM OF INCREASING THE CAPACITY OF SCHOOLS TO IMPLEMENT REFORM EFFORTS

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Overview. It is clear that the focus of school reform has shifted somewhat in the 1980's. Whether the reform effort is an attempt to implement school effectiveness or teacher effectiveness research, follow the mandates of government agencies or implement the recommendations of blue ribbon panels, the focus is on broad school changes covering personnel, organizational factors, attendance, accountability and broad curriculum and instruction changes. Several trends can be seen in these new approaches to reform. The new approaches represent:

1. A shift from creating a process of innovation (with little delineation of what the content of the change should be) to emphasizing what change should be made (with little emphasis on how the change should be brought about). For example, new state mandates and the recommendations of the blue ribbon reports about high schools typically insist on such things as "three years of math including a year of algebra" or "raising the school expectations about academic achievement."

2. A shift from creating a temporary organization (including a somewhat indepedent project director who manages a project and its soft money budget) to working within the regular organizational structure of the school and school district.

3. A shift from focusing on narrowly defined discrete innovations to a focus of comprehensive innovations reaching across organizational dimensions of the school.

Ironically, the new reform proposals and mandates provide little insight as to how such fundamental and important changes are to transpire. Underlying this symposium are several assumptions about these new proposals:

1. In large measure, the prospect for success of these proposals and mandates will be dependent on the implementation of on-going processes of

school improvement carried out at the local level.

2. Past research findings and conceptual frameworks concerning the implementation of specific, narrowly focused innovations will have only limited utility in addressing new schoolwide reform issues.

3. The change process problem is one of developing an on-going process of reform rather than one of implementing a given reform program however well suited to the moment. In this sense, the problem is one of strengthening local capacity for on-going change efforts.

Purpose of the Symposium. The purpose of this symposium is to address the three critical issues regarding the process by which local capacity for on-going reform can be increased. These issues include: a) how the problem of increasing school capacity for on-going reform can be meaningfully conceptualized, b) how secondary schools differ from elementary schools in implementing school reform, and c) how secondary schools can increase their capacity for on-going school reform.

Papers in this symposium are based on a major study of the California School Improvement Program (SIP). The three year $1,000,000 study examined elementary and secondary schools across California which implemented a comprehensive on-going school reform effort. The state envisioned SIP as catalyst for strengthening local capacity for on-going school reform as well as a vehicle for a broader range array of locally-defined improvements in schools. The SIP program features state funding of a local process of school improvement that includes: a) a planning year leading to a school-wide multi-year plan for local reform effort, b) a school site council consisting of parents, teachers and administrators which governs the school reform effort, c) staff development and other implementation support stategies conducted at the local site, d) continual monitoring of the program by the local school

site council and on-going revision of the goals and strategies of the local change effort reflected in the yearly resubmissions of local plan to the state, and e) program reviews of the local effort by trained review teams consisting of state monitors and/or peers from nearby districts.

In general,The SIP program focuses on a broad array of improvements of school quality rather than on test score improvement alone. The state mandated certain broad goals which the local plan had must address. However, the local site was free to determine what specific focus to have within the broad goals and in what order the broad goals should be addressed.

Methodology. Data collection for the study extended over two years and carefully integrated survey research with intensive field study. In year one, a stratified sample of 2,108 respondents representing teachers, principals, parents and local program coordinators at 197 schools in 46 districts completed extensive questionnaires. Also in the first year, preliminary case studies of 55 elementary and secondary sub-sample schools enriched our understanding of the nature of SIP and guided the design of the extensive field study effort in year two.

The second year fieldwork involved 48 elementary and secondary schools in 25 districts drawn as a stratified sub-sample of the year one survey sample. The fieldwork was based on a semi-structured 34 page guide that focused the case study on numerous critical variables and issues identified in year one. Fieldwork involved interviews with teachers, school administrators, parents, students and district level staff; observations of SIP and instructional activity; and document review.

A case survey technique was used which organized case study field notes around a refined fieldwork guide. Reports about each school (averaging 50 single spaced typewritten pages) were written and field workers interacted

for 3 days to refine findings and high-inference ratings about each school. Patterns in the quantitative data were identified through multi-dimensional scaling, followed by descriptive, correlation and multi-linear regression analysis. The qualitative data were used to suggest macro trends as well as expand, document and clarify the quantitative findings.

This paper focuses on conptualizing the problem of increasing the capacity of schools to implement reform efforts. To explore this issue, a conceptual framework was evolved based primarily on the case study and survey data from the first year of the study. In turn, this initial framework guided and was refined by the data collection from the second year of the study.

As an overview, the conceptual framework has several critical elements:

1. Background factors-- those rather immutable local conditions such as whether the local community is urban or rural, poor or professional, predominantly white or minority and whether the school itself is large or small and elementary or secondary.

2. Foreground factors--including all those factors which change more readily ranging from broad factors as the nature of the school/community relationship to narrow factors as the characteristics and customs of the school faculty and the quality of the principal. These factors are assumed to be more ammenable to modification by intentional change processes.

3. SIP Implementation--including the orientation of the SIP program, and several critical dimensions of the SIP process, and

4. Changes in School Quality--those outcomes of the SIP implementation process including improvements in academic achievement, curriculum and instruction, and organizational improvements.

The conceptual relationship of these elements is portrayed in Figure 1.

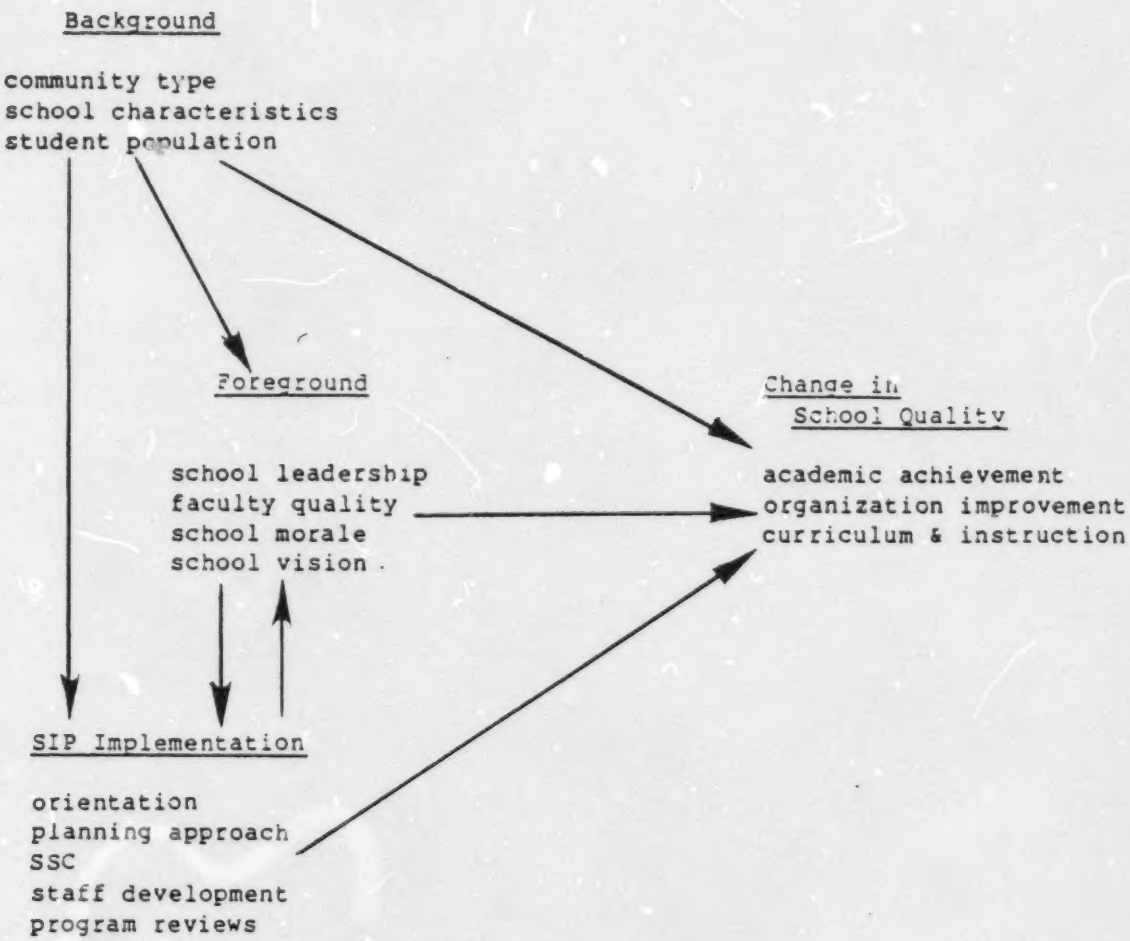

Figure 1

Overview of The Conceptual Model of the SIP Reform Process

Selected findings from the study will be used to illustrate why this conceptual framework is empirically necessary to account for the patterns of reform found in the SIP schools. Both the extensive survey and the intensive field work were used to assess school improvement along a variety of dimensions of school quality and change. While the improvement objectives of each school were explored, the improvement objectives and activities were clustered so that cross-site comparisons could be made. Table 1 presents data from the fieldwork sample which reflect the percentage of schools that, in the fieldworker's judgment, had made various degrees of change in the last few years. These overall change scores are presented for elementary and secondary schools and are reinforced by the survey findings.

In general, the SIP program had a positive effect on the local site. The fieldwork illuminated two patterns in schools that improved greatly or improved. In some schools, SIP was a catalyst for change: it sparked new ways of planning, stimulated a spirit of schoolwide cooperation and renewal, and was instrumental in raising student performance. In other schools, SIP had a more limited, though still quite useful result: it focused attention on curriculum and instructional problems, established planning and evaluation as legitimate school-based activities, or provided a process, and discretionary funds which enabled better management of the multiplicity of special programs that can overwhelm schools. Maintainence was also found in several patterns: a) SIP helped stablize and consolidate previously made changes, or b) it helped schools, especially high schools, maintain day-to day operations.

On balance, elementary schools are shown in Table 1 to have improved more than did secondary schools. Table 2 compares elementary and secondary schools in terms of 4 different types of outcomes. These outcomes were derived empirically by using multidimensional scaling to cluster fieldwork

Table 1

Percentages of Elementary and Secondary Schools That Showed Improvement, Maintenance or Decline During SIP

	Total Field	Elementary Schools	Secondary Schools
Improved Greatly	7%	8%	5%
Improved	45%	52%	38%
Maintained	37%	32%	43%
Declined	11%	8%	14%
Declined Greatly	0%	0%	0%
N=	46	25	21

Table 2

Average Improvement Scores For Elementary and Secondary Schools As A Result of the SIP Program

	Mean Improvement Score For**		
Type of Improvement	Total Field	Elementary	Secondary
Student-Centered	.55	.52	.59
Organization-Centered	.32	.46	.14*
Community Relations	.35	.56	.10*
Overall	.43	.51	.33

* $p < .10$

** For ease of reading, the improvement scores were standardized to a range between 2.0 and -2.0. An average score of .43 means that the field sample showed a slight improvement on average.

ratings of improvement in the following areas: educational output, student environment, community ralations, school as a workplace, organizational health, pedagogical quality, physical resources, and overall quality. The clusters also made sense conceptually. For example, educational output, student environment and pedagogical quality were closely related as were school as a workplace, organizational health and the school's use of its physical resources. Consequently, in Table 2, schools were examined in terms of 4 categories of outcomes: student-centered improvements, organization-centered improvements, community relations improvements, and overall improvements.

Elementary and secondary schools made about the same amount of improvement in student-centered outcomes. Yet organization-centered and community realtions improvements were a different story. There was more improvement in the organization-centered area in elementary schools than in secondary schools. Fieldwork and survey analysis from the study confirm this general finding and suggest reasons why this might have happened. Similarly, elementary schools were more likely to improve in community relations than were secondary schools. Again, the case studies and the survey data suggest reasons for this pattern.

The findings discussed above have important implications for amplifying the conceptual framework presented in Figure 1. Before embarking on that analysis, however, findings related to another part of the conceptual framework will be presented. These findings pertain to the form which SIP took at a local school site. Schools were oriented toward SIP in ways that foreshadowed everything else they did within the program. This orientation is discussed here to explore the part of Figure 1, the conceptual framework for the study, that pertains to SIP implementation.

Figure 2 presents the various orientations which a local site might have about their SIP program. The first type is called a process orientation. Some schools conceived of SIP as a process of change, and attempted to implement SIP in ways generally consistent with the state's vision. We found many variations among school that had a process approach. The first variation concerns schools that aim for improvement in curriculum and instruction. This orientation might be considered the "ideal" because it so well fits the state's vision of how SIP schools work best. In this ideal, a SIP school a) develops a plan to make gains in curriculum and instruction; b) continuously evaluates the plan and improves it as needed; c) engages in a broader schoolwide planning process; d) establishes a School Site Council that decides on central issues in the school, e) involves parents actively in the SSC; and f) supports staff development activities. Few schools in this category fully realize this ideal, but some nonetheless orient toward SIP in ways that are consistent with it.

Other school follow various components of the SIP process, but do not directly seek to improve curriculum and instruction. Some schools aim to strengthen their community relations, using the SIP approach as their vehicle. Some schools follow the SIP planning process, but do so essentially as a means of coordinating their special programs--i.e., use SIP as an umbrella to plan and coordinate ongoing projects. Finally, some school use SIP as an accountability mechanism. In these schools, principals usually dominate the SSC and use the SIP plan as a road map which teachers can be held accountable.

The second basic type of orientation is the program orientation, wherein schools see and use SIP very much like a categorical program, and even talk of SIP in categorical terms. As a categorical program, SIP's goals

BASIC TYPES OF ORIENTATIONS	VARIATIONS WITHIN TYPES
PROCESS	for curriculum and instructional change
	for developing the school community
	for coordinating categorical programs
	for managing the school
PROGRAM	for curriculum and instructional change
	for non-instructional change
FUNDING SOURCE	for school change
	for no purposive use

Figure 2

Orientations Toward SIP Taken By Local Sites

can involve curriculum and/or instruction, but SIP might be run like a Chapter I project, with an emphasis on remediation for a subset of students. Some schools also employ this narrow programmatic approach to meet non-instructional objectives like improving attendance.

The final category is funding source, wherein schools essentially use SIP money, but disassociates that use from the SIP process or from programmatic objectives. Different school with funding source orientations in fact use SIP funds for almost diametrically opposed purposes. In some schools, the money serves no particular aim and is essentially wasted. Other school use the money creatively even though they ignore the SIP process and do not articulate programmatic aims. For example, these schools use SIP funds for teacher-intiated projects, as if the funds were a Title IV-c grant. They were interested in school change, but not particularly in SIP per se.

Table 3 shows the relationship of SIP orientation to the overall change made at the school. Table 4 expands on this pattern by showing improvement scores for elementary and secondary schools related to the 4 types of school outcomes discussed earlier in this paper. Once again, the survey data support the general pattern of findings drawn from the fieldwork.

From Table 3, seventy-five percent of those schools that were oriented toward SIP in a process way improved, 13 percent maintained existing levels of quality and 12 percent declined. For the program orientation, in contrast, there is a shift downwards--39 percent improved, 56 percent maintained and 5 percent declined. There is even more of a shift towards decline associated with the funding source orientation. In general, process oriented schools were likely to improve, and program oriented schools were likely to maintain their previous levels of outcomes.

Table 4 illustrates how the SIP orientation of elementary and secondary

Table 3

Percentage of Sites That Improved, Maintained or Declined by the SIP Orientation of the Site

TYPE OF CHANGE	TYPE OF ORIENTATION		
	PROCESS	PROGRAM	FUNDING SOURCE
IMPROVED	75%	39%	42%
MAINTAINED	13%	56%	42%
DECLINED	12%	5%	16%
	100%	100%	100%

Table 4

Extent of School Improvement by SIP Orientation of the Site

TYPE OF IMPROVEMENT	MEAN IMPROVEMENT SCORE					
	PROCESS		PROGRAM		FUNDING SOURCE	
	Elem. (1)	Sec. (2)	Elem. (3)	Sec. (4)	Elem. (5)	Sec. (6)
STUDENT-CENTERED	.73	.40	.48	.59	.19	.53
ORGANIZATION-CENTERED	.73	.40	.22	.00	.33	.12
COMMUNITY RELATIONS	.82	.00	.20	.12	.75	.12
OVERALL	.74	.35	.34	.31	.31	.33

school differ in relation to the 4 major types of outcomes. For student-centered improvement, elementary schools with a SIP process orientation have considerably greater student-centered improvement than, in turn, do program oriented or funding source oriented schools. Similarly, elementary schools with a process orientation are more likely to have organization-centered and community relation centered improvements. Thus, a school's orientation toward SIP really matters at the elementary level.

The pattern does not hold true at the secondary level. Secondary schools with a funding source orientation improve about as much in the student area as do schools with a programmatic orientation. Process orientated school do less well, though these differences are small and are not statistically significant.

The process orientation is related to organization-centered changes but no orientation is related to community relations improvements, which were minimal in the seccndary level despite the SIP orientation. In general, the SIP orientation level is very important at the elementary level but does not have nearly as great an effect at the secondary level.

Implications for the Conceptualization of the Change Process. This paper began with a set of 3 assumptions about the change process needed to implement reforms such are currently be proposed or mandated. These assumptions are: a) that the success of these reforms rests in large part on the change process which needs to be established, b) that past research findings and conceptual frameworks which focused on the implementation of narrow, discrete innovations will have only limited value in addressing new schoolwide reform issues, and c) that the needed change process must be an on-going process of reform rather than one of seeking to implement a given reform program, however well suited or conceived for the moment.

Within this framework of assumptions, the findings from the SIP program have a number of implications for how such a change process must be conceived. First, it is clear that background factors will dramatically influence the implementation process at the local site. Findings in this paper, but not in the study, were limited to differences between elementary and secondary schools as background factors. These differences were related to both the way the local site proceeded to implement the change process and to the relative impact of the change effort on various types of school outcomes. The change process associated with the new reform efforts will have to be differenciated by the multiple background factors at each site.

Second, the orientation of the site to these reform efforts will, in turn, greatly influence many dimensions of the implementation process. Similar to the SIP orientation of California schools in this study, some schools seeking to implement major innovations connected with the current wave of reform will construe the local change process as alternatively: a) a process of change or a catalyst for local initiative, b) a new program that must be implemented, and/or c) a funding source to support local operations. Since many of the reform efforts evade delineating or protraying the process by which local sites are to procede, another danger is that local sites will also avoid conceptualizing the local process needed for successful reform. Yet, implicit in local action will be an orientation toward the change process. If this orientation is not carefully considered, it is likely that current reforms will be quite unsuccessful for several reasons suggested by this study.

Finally, the outcomes of current reform efforts need to be reviewed in terms of the variety of outcomes such as are found in this study. From this study, it was clear that different change orientations and background factors

had unique relationships to different outcomes of schooling. Some of the current reforms emphasize organization-centered outcomes such as attendence or improved instructional leadership. Effective processes for securing these aims will need to emphasize different factors than will processes aimed more directly at student-centered improvements.

An overall implication from this study is that effective change processes will require a careful mapping of the local change situation. This mapping must include background factors, foreground factors, implementation processes as related to various types of schooling outcomes. The concept of mixing and matching change strategies to schooling outcomes will be critical if the current reform efforts are to be successful. The next papers in the symposium expand on what such mixing and matching must address and what factors were found to be important in the SIP study.